

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

No. 939. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DATELESS BARGAIN.

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Author of "*Lady Lovelace*," etc.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AFTER all, the police had not to bring any extraordinary amount of ingenuity to bear upon the task of discovering Kathleen.

They went a little far a-field at first. Having learned that a young woman answering to her description had taken ticket for Liverpool, they immediately concluded that she was to be found in America, and set the Atlantic wires going: only, however, to discover that she was not, at any rate, to be heard of at New York.

A detective, despatched on second thoughts to her father and mother in Gloucestershire, returned with the tidings that she had sent for a box of her clothes, left behind at Overbury; that she had married Bryan O'Shea, much to the disgust of her parents, who "hadn't much opinion of the O'Shea family;" and that her present address was at the O'Shea Farm, Lough Lea, County Down.

This news circuitously reached Joyce and Mab in their sea-side cottage.

Mab, as usual, had a kind word to say for the girl.

"I don't think, on the whole, we treated either Ned or Kathleen fairly," she said; "we did our best to give them notions beyond their station; and then, when most they wanted our help, we let them slip through our fingers."

Joyce characteristically dismissed the matter.

"She was a weak little goose," she said; "if she meant to marry Bryan O'Shea, why didn't she do it without any fuss?"

With the tragic anxieties that pressed upon her at the moment, a sentence seemed more than enough to expend upon this girl and her ridiculous love affair. But the chances were that if Joyce had had given to her a true account of the facts of the case, she would considerably have modified her epithets. If, for instance, she had seen pretty Kathleen's white, forlorn face, throughout the whole of that long stolen journey to Liverpool on the day of Mrs. Shenstone's wedding, or had heard her talk with her brother Ned, when close upon midnight she had succeeded in unearthing him from his lodgings somewhere in the slums in the heart of the town.

The brother and sister had walked together up and down the dark side of a quiet street, talking in low, constrained tones.

This in substance was their conversation.

"I think you must be out of your mind. I never thought you had much, but what little you had is wanting now," Ned said in a hard, gruff voice.

Kathleen's reply came in muffled tones. "Ned, tell me what I have come all these miles to ask you, and I'll go back home, or to the Shenstones, or anywhere else in the world you like. Where is Mr. Ledyard? What have you, and the Captain, and Bryan O'Shea done with him?"

"What has anyone of us to do with Mr. Ledyard, I should like to know? And also what have you to do with the gentleman? Will you tell me that, my girl?"

"I? Nothing whatever. Only this may interest you, perhaps. Miss Joyce is breaking her heart after him."

"You were not always so particularly fond of Miss Joyce. I've heard you wish her in her grave more times than I could count," sneered Ned.

"Oh, well, she'll be there soon enough without any wishing on my part—and," this added with emphasis on each syllable, "Miss Mab too, for she's breaking her heart as fast as her sister."

"Is that true, Kathleen?" he asked; and there came a softer note in his voice now.

"Gospel truth. Send me back with a message to her."

Ned resumed his walk. His steps at first were hurried, and Kathleen could barely keep pace with him. Presently they flagged, and she laid her hand upon his arm.

"Look here, Ned——" she began.

He turned upon her furiously. "Look here, my girl. The best thing you can do is to be off to Lough Lea as quick as possible, and marry Bryan O'Shea as you promised. Otherwise it may go harder than you think with one or two you care most for."

Had there been moonlight enough to show Kathleen's face, Ned might have noted an odd, resolute look come into it; a pallor and rigidity which seemed to turn her into the marble likeness of herself.

"Very well," she said slowly, "I'll go to Lough Lea and marry Bryan O'Shea; and whatever comes of it, I shan't forget 'twas you gave me the good advice."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JOYCE was no sooner safely shut in in her sea-side solitude, than she fell to measuring the distance she had put between herself and possible hope. Here was a man who held in his hand the secret she would have paid for cheerfully with her life, and here was she fleeing from him, and stopping her ears, as though she had neither part nor lot in the matter.

It had been easy enough—comparatively, that is—in the height of her passion, to wish she had a thousand tongues to speak their "noes" to the hideous temptation; it was not so easy in a cooler moment to echo the wish. At a crisis her instincts had saved her; now, when she took to reasoning on the matter her brain grew bewildered, her moral sense confused. A hundred thoughts and plans in turn suggested themselves, only in turn to be dismissed as impracticable.

Joyce sorely needed a counsellor in this emergency—but where was one to be found?

Mab, for obvious reasons, was unfitted

for the part; Uncle Archie, with gout threatening and his irritable temper at its worst, was scarcely the one to handle so delicate a matter. The police authorities, except as a last resource, were not to be thought of. Joyce knew that, if she attempted compulsion in any form, the man would simply throw himself into a defiant attitude, and her chance would be at an end.

Of course there was always the supposition that Buckingham's words might have been mere bombast to force her to favour his suit to Mab. But it was a supposition she did not allow herself to dwell upon. Her only thought was how to get at the knowledge he might hold, without striking an unworthy bargain with him.

It was scarcely strange that in this connection Ned Donovan's name should suggest itself. Although she had no facts whereupon to base the conjecture, there had always been present to her mind the possibility that Ned and Buckingham were members of the same political organisation. If such were the case, there might be means of information common to both, which Ned might work advantageously for her now. Also there was the possibility, that as comrades in a league, Ned might have some influence over Buckingham, which he might bring usefully into play.

In addition to all this, there was his devotion to Mab, which, naturally enough, was an open secret between the two sisters. In other circumstances, Joyce would have been reluctant to trade upon a devotion, whose unobtrusiveness and unselfishness years had tested, but had not shaken. Now, however, in this her sore extremity, she felt justified in appealing to it.

Whether direct good to herself might result from it or not, of one thing she felt confident, viz., that no unworthy concessions respecting Mab would be made by him.

So she sat down and wrote a long, passionate, pleading letter to the young Irishman, giving him, in outline, the account of her interview with Buckingham, beseeching him to see this man for her, and get what terms he could out of him.

"To no man living but you would I entrust such a mission," she wrote. "I speak the simple truth when I say I would rather it should be in your hands than in mine; for, alas, that I should have to write it! I feel that your devotion and loyalty to my sister are at this crisis more to be relied on than mine."

Then she concluded with an entreaty that he would use judgement and caution in the matter, remembering how much they all had at stake. Farthermore, she added a postscript imploring him on no account to let Buckingham have her present address; "for, see him again in this world," she wrote, "I never will, or my chance of Heaven will be gone."

It was a desperate appeal to make; but affairs were in a desperate condition with her. When it was done, she knew not whether it had been well or ill done.

She enclosed the letter under cover to Kathleen, at Lough Lea, for of Ned's whereabouts she was totally ignorant.

Then she set herself to fill up the terrible gap of waiting that must ensue, as best she might, with the common-place and the trivial.

The common-place is one of the few things in life of which the supply is in excess of the demand. It will never be elbowed into a corner by tragedy, let it try as it will.

So, at least, Joyce found, as she waited impatiently for letter or message from Donovan.

There came the usual flow of letters to read and answer.

Like this from good Aunt Bell:

"Do spare your uncle as much painful correspondence as possible, Joyce. Poor darling, his temper was always an irritable one, and it doesn't improve under this long attack. If I didn't give in to him in every matter, great or small, the house wouldn't hold us two."

Or this from Uncle Archie:

"I'm a little out of pain to-day, and hope to keep so if your aunt will only let me have my own way as to medicine and diet. It's a little late in the day to complain; but you know she was always inclined to be despotic, and, to keep the peace, I simply have to knock under to her in everything."

And, finally, this from her mother, on her wedding-tour:

"We have had a desperate—desperate quarrel, darling Joyce. I'm coming home at once. Ah, my good looks have been my bane all my life through! If I had been a plain woman I might still have been happy Ernestine Shenstone. It all began yesterday because I told him some people in the hotel where we are staying thought I was his daughter, not his wife. Now, I ask you, was that enough to put him in a tearing rage, and make him call

me 'madam,' instead of 'my child,' all the rest of the day? And he does look like my father—no one who saw us together could deny it. The bald patch at the back of his head gets bigger every day, and he goes to sleep in his easy-chair whenever I begin to talk to him, and if that is not a proof of old age creeping on, I don't know what is. Oh, and do you know, Joyce, he wears a horrible red cotton night-cap at nights, and sometimes he forgets and comes down to breakfast in it. If I had only seen him in it before we married! But there, it doesn't matter; only expect me at Overbury almost as soon as you get this. By the way, dear, there's one thing I should like to ask you to do for me. He is always asking me—at least he has asked me once or twice lately—if I know anything of the interior of a place called Earlswood. Now, between ourselves, Joyce, I don't, but I don't want him to know my ignorance; so if you could just find out a little about the place, and let me know, so that I could give him an answer which might imply I knew a great deal, I should be very much obliged to you. I mean only, of course, if you don't see me back in a day or two. Perhaps, after all, I may alter my mind; one never feels quite sure of oneself in such matters."

And a postscript to the letter, added the next day, showed that Mrs. Bullen had very much altered her mind.

"Darling children," it ran, "we've kissed and made it up again—it was nothing more than a lovers' quarrel, after all. We are off to Venice to-morrow, and most likely sha'n't return to England until next spring, we both hate the cold weather so. I send you the letter just as I wrote it yesterday, so that you may have all our news."

"Your loving Mother,

"ERNESTINE BULLEN."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NED received Joyce's letter at Cork just as he was on the point of starting for Lough Lea with a sealed packet for Sylvia Buckingham, who was still enjoying her comfortable quarters at the "Abbey House" with a pair of vigorous Nationalists for host and hostess. It raised in him a riot of tumultuous feeling, adding fuel to his slumbering fire of discontent with his work, of animosity to his chief. He anathematised himself for his folly, in swearing allegiance to a league that reckoned the unreasoning obedience of a dog among the cardinal virtues. Cranmer-like, he could

have burned in slow fire that right hand of his, which only overnight had telegraphed to Captain Buckingham Mab and Joyce's address.

She, the woman he had worshipped from afar with such true, unselfish devotion to be handed over to the cruel keeping of a man like Buckingham!

"See him!" he muttered, "ay, that I will, and to some purpose too! I knew the day of reckoning wasn't far off, but I didn't think it was at my door."

Then he had started on his journey to Lough Lea, forming his plans as he went; but it was not until Lough Lea was reached, and he was making his way in the dawn of a golden August morning through the green lanes to the Abbey House, that his plan of action definitely and finally arranged itself.

It was simply this. He would follow on his chief's footsteps, forestall his arrival at Tretwick, if such a thing were possible, meet him within a stone's throw of the house where these sisters had taken refuge, and have a few sharp, strong words with him there. Yes, he knew well enough what those words must be. Chief or no chief, for a brief five minutes he would speak as man speaks to man, when the full heart dictates the words, and give him to understand that these young ladies were not now, nor at any future time, to be molested. Should the Captain laugh his words to scorn and order him back to his duty, well, then he would have a few words to say to him about duty also, and would remind that on one occasion he had somewhat stretched his prerogative which compelled his subordinates to an unreasoning obedience, and that an impeachment to that effect laid before his superiors at New York might be attended with unpleasant consequences to himself.

Had Sylvia Buckingham read the man's thoughts in his face as he presented his sealed packet to her, she could not have treated him with a more repellent harshness. Possibly she took her cue from her brother. This Irishman was evidently out of favour at head-quarters.

Ned kept his discontent to himself. His thoughts were too busy with the course he had mapped out for himself, and its minor difficulties of detail, to allow him to be much stirred by superficial annoyances.

From the Abbey House he took his way straight to the O'Shea farm, separated from it by two or three fields and an occasional bog. It was an antiquated and ill-kept

edifice, flanked on one side by an untidy-looking potato-field, on the other by an equally untidy-looking poultry-yard. A few gaunt cattle grazed in an adjoining field, whose gaping, torn hedges betokened the fact that it had known nothing of repair or hurdle since the last hunt had ridden through.

Whatever revenue the O'Shea family might enjoy, this little ragged homestead most assuredly could not be credited with the responsibility of being its fountain-head.

An old woman smoking a short pipe sat on a bench at the front door. She had a bright yellow cotton kerchief tied over her head, but beyond this her costume inclined to the dusky and ill-mended. Occasionally she withdrew her pipe to exclaim an "Arrah thin, be off wid ye," to the cocks and hens who came straggling in from the poultry-yard, making frantic efforts to slip past her bare feet into the house. This exclamation, alternating with another, a muttered Irish anathema, whose modified English equivalent would be, "That's a fine wife for an O'Shea to bring home! Look at her and admire her." The said anathema following the shadow of a girl down the garden path to the gate, where Ned stood waiting for her.

"Look at her and admire her," assuredly not a difficult task for an eye undazzled by O'Shea ideals. Kathleen O'Shea is not the Kathleen Donovan of a year ago. That Kathleen was a good ten years younger to look at, and about her there hung such a glamour of bewitching smiles, fun, and arch glances, that one never stopped to criticise the shape of her mouth, the colour of hair or eyes. Now that the glamour has gone, the fun, arch glances, bewitching smiles together disappeared, it is possible to take calm stock of her face and features, to discover that her eyes are large, deep blue, that dark rings around them accentuate their look of haunting melancholy, and tell the tale of weary days and sleepless nights. One wonders whether it is the pale face that throws the blue-black hair into such bold contrast, or whether it is the black hair that makes the face show so deathly white in the glinting morning sunlight.

In one respect only is the Kathleen of to-day identical with the Kathleen of last year, and that is in the matter of pretty and neat attire. That bygone Kathleen had been known to spend an hour in front of her looking-glass, arranging her glossy

hair, before she saw fit to present herself to her young mistresses, to perform for them a similar office. Her mother had been wont to assert that the only way in which to get housework done by those dainty fingers of hers would be to banish all looking-glasses from the house, when not a doubt she would set to work to scour the pewter plates on the kitchen dresser, in order to make them do duty as mirrors.

Whether Kathleen through necessity had been driven to perform such an office for the O'Shea pewter plates might be doubtful, but certain it was that those plaits of dark hair, which shone like a raven's wing in the sunlight, must have had abundant aid from a looking-glass, in order to their present elaborate arrangement, as likewise the prettily-tied knot of ribbon which held her collar in its place.

The brother and sister talked in low tones, with many a furtive glance towards the old woman and her pipe. Ned's words, though all but whispered, were vehement and emphatic.

"I tell you," he said, breaking abruptly into Kathleen's queries as to the health and well-being of the old father and mother in Gloucestershire, "life isn't worth a brass farthing to me. I'm hunted, dogged from morning till night, in spite of all the hard work I've done for them."

Kathleen laughed, not the pleasant laugh of old days, but a harsh, scornful laugh. Her voice, too, was harsh and scornful as she answered:

"You work hard, but you don't work well. They say you're not to be trusted—you're too tender-hearted."

"Tender-hearted! I'll give them proof of my tender heart if I get a chance."

"When they set you to stake Mike Kearney's cattle, didn't you let them all slip through your fingers, so that the beasts came back to their sheds so soon as the boys had left ploughing up the fields?" she went on, not heeding the interruption.

"The poor dumb things! I would have cut off my right hand sooner than torture them! If those men had any sense, they would——" he broke off for a moment, as if he dared not trust himself to speak his mind.

Kathleen looked warningly over her shoulder towards the house. "Don't forget you're on the O'Shea property at the present moment," she said sarcastically.

"Confound the O'Sheas, every man of them! Now, what good has your marriage with Bryan done for me, I should like to

know, after all the fine talk he and Maurice made over it?"

"Ah! were you fool enough to expect any good for yourself out of that?"

"I don't expect much from any man or woman, let them be brother or sister a thousand times over; but I don't look to have my footsteps watched and dogged by a man who has married my sister, and that man's own brother."

"They're set to do it."

"I know that. Now look here, Kathleen." Here Ned's voice took a softer tone. "Just get those two off my heels for the next twenty-four hours—I don't want more. Tell them I'm off to Milford on the Captain's business—special business. Swear it, if you like. Tell them I shall be back again in Cork to-morrow night at farthest, and shall report myself there. Tell them any lies you like—you used to be famous at that sort of thing once."

"I may be again when the right time comes."

"Well, the right time has come, take my word for it. Don't you see my necessity? It's a matter of life or death, I tell you."

"I spoke those words to you once before, but you shut your ears to them. I told you Miss Joyce would die, Miss Mab would die, all for a secret you might tell but wouldn't."

Ned's face grew white. "Give over fooling, Kathleen, for the love of Heaven. I tell you this is a matter of life or death to me; that perhaps in this world you and I may never set eyes on each other again. Now will you do what I want you—get me free of those two men, Maurice and Bryan O'Shea, for the next twenty-four hours?"

"It's easy to say 'get me free of those two.' How am I to do it, I should like to know?"

"Do it any way that comes uppermost. Don't stick at a trifle so long as it's done, and that before I'm out of sight of the house. Get them into a row with the O'Gormans—you used to be a capital hand at setting men by the ears at one time. Make it a shillelagh business if you like, and then bring out the whisky and deal it out liberally all round. Do it anyhow, so long as it's done. I tell you it's a matter of life and death; not only to me, but perhaps to some others." This added with a significance that must have set the girl's thoughts ranging.

"I'll do my best," she promised; but the promise was given sullenly and grudgingly enough.

"Very well, then, take care that it is your best, or it may be worse than useless to me. Now I'll go. Remember it's to Milford, on the Captain's business, that I'm going. Stick to that, whatever else you're doubtful about."

He turned on his heel and left her. Possibly it was the bright August sun which made him draw his hat low over his eyes, and choose the shadow of the hedgerow to walk in rather than the open road.

Kathleen stood watching him out of sight, leaning over the gate and shadowing her eyes with her hands. Suddenly, to her surprise, he stood still in the pathway, then came back with steps as hurried as those that had carried him away.

"What is it?" she asked. "I've no money—no, not a penny; so it's no use asking me for any."

"I don't want money." He looked right and left to make sure there were no listeners, and his voice sank to a whisper. "It's just this—if anything happens to me—I mean if I'm found one day lying in the road with a bullet through my brain, I want my watch—my old silver watch"—here he laid his hand upon it—"given to Miss Joyce—to Miss Joyce, do you understand?"

Then before she had time to make her reply, he did a thing she had never known him do in all his life before—leaned over the gate and kissed her.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

STIRLING.

BETWEEN Linlithgow and Stirling, the way passes through a flat and fertile country, with Falkirk lying in its midst among the smoke of factories and workshops, and with tall chimneys rising out of the reek. A great gathering-place is Falkirk for all the country round, with its four great trysts in the year. In the churchyard lies Sir John Grahame, the friend of Wallace, who was slain at the battle of Falkirk, his tomb being still in evidence, renewed from age to age by the patriotic burghers. There was weaving and spinning in the old burgh, no doubt, when the great fight was fought in which Wallace was overthrown; but the wealth of the county then lay in the wide fertile plain to the north, known as the Carse of Falkirk. Hereabouts are the great Carron ironworks, and to the west a little hamlet retains the Arthurian name of

Camelon, and there are traces of a former Roman station, which at some time or other, according to the old chroniclers, was assuredly a great city of the Picts, with its twelve brazen gates. For hereabouts we are upon the edge of the great Caledonian forest. There are few traces of the forest now; but still, away to the west, the hills rise in wild and barren loneliness, and a great part of Stirlingshire, from hence to the shires of Loch Lomond, is barren, uncultivated moor and heath, which has changed little in diameter since the days when Picts, and Scots, and Britons, and intruding Saxons from the shores of Forth, fought their fierce but dimly-remembered battles:—

The war
That thundered in and out the gloomy skirts
Of Caledon the forest:

Stirling, which we are now approaching, rising from its rock that dominates the country round, and the ancient bridge over the Forth below, has been marked out by nature for a national fortress. Thus Stirling is the link of the Lowlands, the tie that unites the fertile Lothians with the rich districts of Fife and Kinross. As a fortress, too, it keeps open the way to Perth and Forfar, to bonnie Dundee and grim Aberdeen, and to all the lowland countries along the coast.

The bulwark of the north,
Gray Stirling with her towers and town.

The town itself has a pleasant modern appearance, spread ever the slopes and meadows about the south rock with handsome villas, good shops, and tramway lines here and there. But the place assumes the grim appearance of antiquity, with wynds and courts, and bare gloomy houses, as you mount towards the castle.

Here we have the grey, solid old church of the Grey Friars, built by James the Fourth, who was a frequent guest at the Franciscan convent adjoining—now only remembered in the name of a street or court. Here the King would busy himself in his work of expiation for his crime against his father, often to the disgust of his courtiers, who did not care to share his penances. Hence he is addressed by a poet of the period

Cum hame, and dwell nae mair in Stirling,
Quhair fish to sell are nane but spirling.

This couplet, by the way, rather militates again the tradition—shared by many other places—that once upon a time there was a stipulation in the in-

dentures of apprentices that they should not be fed on salmon more than three times a week. On this point, too, Sibbald is a witness, who says "Many of the gentry get saumon in their powes," thus implying that the townsfolk did not get much of the lordly fish. While he goes on to say how "Spirlings are taken in great quantities near Stirling." But if the spirling is the same as the éperlan of the French rivers, a King even might come across many a worse dish than these, nicely fried in oil, and strung upon a skewer. Although with all this, toujours spirlings would pall, no doubt, whether upon the palates of Princes or of 'prentice boys.

But, if tired of spirlings, the King might have visited the Abbot of Cambuskenneth, on the other side of the river, who doubtless never lacked salmon or other dainties, seeing that the Abbey lands were some of the richest in the kingdom, lying among the crooks of the river, of which it is said :

A crook in the Forth
Is worth an Earldom in the North.

We have not yet then, it appears, arrived into the limits of the North ; that is a region that flies as we approach ; and Scott's epithet, already quoted, of the bulwark of the North, would not be accepted by a chiel from Sutherland or Caithness.

Stirling and the banks of Forth hereabouts, enjoy an exceptionally pleasant climate, and the poet Dunbar recalls with regret, the merry songs of the birds, from all the hills around, to which he listened as he lay awake among the "towers high" of fair Sirling.

And yet we are reminded by the appearance of the cemetery that surrounds the old grey church, that the climate is not altogether that of Italy or Greece. There are statues, marble statues, and monuments, Now everybody knows what a poor figure sculptured marbles cut after a few years' exposure to the rigours of a British winter. But at Stirling, the marble monuments are put under glass cases. The effect is not altogether a happy one ; and, with it all, marble must look cold enough in winter, when Ben Lomond and Ben Ledi and all the hills about are mantled thick with snow.

But in summer time the view from the old church-yard is pleasant enough. Below lies the valley, where the tournaments were held.

At one time or other the old church and the old castle have spoken sharply to each other, as in the Civil Wars, when General Monk established a battery in the church-yard ; and a contemporary Roundhead informs us how "the Enemy plaid hard against our men that were in the steeple of the Town Kirk, which did much among them."

Happily for the town kirk the siege did not last long, as the garrison soon beat a parley. The reason of their confusion was a mutiny of the soldiers in the castle, who were mostly Highlanders, "and not accustomed to granadoes." The result was surrender, with the honours of war, the garrison marching out with horses, arms, beat of drum, lighted matches and baggage, "as much gear as they could carry." And so we have a flaming account to send to the Parliament of the "Surrender of Stirling Castle, with five thousand arms, forty peece of Ordnance, (twenty-seven faire brasse peeeces, two great Iron guns, and eleven Leather guns) provisions for five hundred men for above a year, thirty barrels of claret and strong water, twenty-six barrels of gunpowder, all the Records of Scotland, with the chaire, clouth, and sword of state, and much furniture of the King and Parliament robes." Then there were "the Earl of Marre's coronet and stirops of gold ;" all excellent plunder, and, with the rest, "great stores of the county and townspeople in the castle, which they had liberty to carry away, little or nothing being imbeazled."

Again, in 1746, the Castle fired upon the church, when the tower was filled with Highlanders, firing volleys and waving flags to celebrate the glorious victory of their Prince at Falkirk.

But the old church seems not a penny the worse for its warlike adventures, and looks down coldly upon the calm and ordered life of to-day ; when a sergeant's party, or a squad of Highlanders in their white fatigue dress, are all that is left to represent the Royal cortège winding up to the Castle gate.

But hark ! what blithe and jolly peal
Makes the Franciscan steeple reel ?
And see ! upon the crowded street,
In motley groups what maskers meet !
Banner and pageant, pipe and drum.

'Assuredly the old tower is not endangered by the blithe and jolly peal of the present day.

A notable display of the honours of the

realm, was the coronation of James the Sixth in this old church of Stirling, the baby King being not much more than a year old; with the Bishop of Orkney to crown and anoint his baby brows, and John Knox to make the sermon, to which the young monarch was happily insensible. The very pulpit is shown close by, and the massive hour-glass that the Great Reformer would turn and turn again in the full fervour of discourse. All this, with the standard weights of Scotland, that once it was the privilege of the burgh to guard, and other curios of the kind, are to be seen at the Guild-house, which is close to the church porch, and is in itself the local habitation of Cowanes Hospital.

Stirling abounds in well-endowed foundations of the kind. But Cowanes Hospital is the richest of all the charities of Stirling; although its founder began life as a pedlar, and roamed the country with a pack on his back, making such a bad start, that on one occasion he is said to have drunk away all his pack among boon companions. Our hero, after all, was of the ancient House of Colquhoun, but spelt his name in a more phonetic and rational manner, for it seems that the Cowens and Cowans were in origin poor relations of the said aristocratic family, who dropped the spare consonants, as they gave up their coat-of-arms, when they took to peddling or weaving. Anyhow, Cowane became Dean of the Guild Merchant, having made a fortune out of wool-stapling and foreign trading; and, having no heirs of his own, made over the reversion of his wealth to the poor. And the spirit that prompted the bequest seems to have survived in Stirling, even to the present day; looking to the recently-founded Smith Institute, adorned with a hundred of Mr. Smith's respectable pictures, and for the rest embellished with many precious relics of old Stirling.

A neighbour and contemporary of Cowanes was a personage of much more exalted fortune. The old house which still exists and bears the name of Argyle's lodging, now occupied as a military hospital, was built by Sir William Alexander, of Menstrie, a plain country laird in origin, but who turned a poetic, or rather a versifying, vein to such good account, that he secured the favour of the Scottish Solomon, to whom the poet dedicated his first ponderous tragedy of Darius, in verses that, may be acquitted of any intentional satire.

No doubt our warlike Caledonian Coast
(Still kept unconquered by the heaven's decree)
Expelled the Pictes, repell'd the Danes, did boast,
In spite of all the Romane legions, free
As that which was ordained (though long time crost
In this Herculean birth) to bring forth thee
Whom many a famous sceptred parent brings
From an undaunted race, to do great things.

Like his Royal master, the poet is often "super-grammaticam," a fault kindly excused by Dr. Johnson, as "perhaps to be attributed to his long familiarity with the Scotch language." Anyhow, our courtly poet was destined to do great things in the way of personal advancement. He was made Gentleman Usher to Prince Charles; when Drummond of Hawthornden apostrophises him:

Amid thy sacred cares and courtly toils,
Alexis!

In the following year we find him Master of Requests, and his services were rewarded with a lucrative monopoly of the copper coinage of Scotland, and presently with a grant of the whole of Nova Scotia—thus first named in the Royal grant.

More profitable to him were a hundred brand-new baronetcies of Nova Scotia, of which he had the disposal, each of which cost the happy recipient of the title some two hundred pounds. The Nova Scotian settlement, it will be remembered, was something of a failure, and was eventually sold to the French. But the baronetcies remained, and before long Sir William was himself ennobled by the title of Viscount Canada. The fashion of these dignities "in partibus," was not persevered in, and eventually the Viscount received the more homely and appropriate title of Earl of Stirling. In the meantime, with his accumulated wealth, he was able to build this grand house upon the High Street of Stirling, over which he caused to be sculptured the motto, "Per mare et per terras," alluding to his travels and schemes of colonisation, but which was read by his townsmen as "Per metre et per turners," alluding to the sources of his fortune; the poetry that is, and the unpopular coins, whose intrinsic value was far below the humble sum they represented.

The Earl died before the misfortunes of his Royal master reached their climax, in the very year of the reassembling of the Long Parliament. After his death the house was sold to the Marquis of Argyle, who here entertained King Charles the Second, when he reigned in Scotland under the Covenant. There was something unlucky in entertaining the Stuarts, for the Mar-

quis's guest did not hesitate to sign his host's death-warrant soon after the Restoration. And the Marquis's son, the Earl of Argyle, who gave hospitable entertainment to the Duke of York in the same lodging, was served in the same way when the latter became King James the Seventh.

A house that recalls still earlier events in Scottish history is the ruined mansion of the Earls of Mar, which stands between Grey Friars and the highway. The house was built with the stones from the ruined Abbey of Cambuskenneth, and the generally received opinion is that it was never finished nor inhabited. But Sibbold describes the house as actually occupied, and relates how the Earl of Mar is said to have kept a very great port in this house, which occasioned one of the Stirling merchants who had been merchandising in the Baltic, to say, "That the Earl of Mar kept a greater house than the King of Denmark!"

Mar's work was still unfinished in the early part of James the Sixth's reign; for we read how the Earl of Mar defended himself behind its walls, and by that means frustrated an enterprise that might have changed the current of history very materially. It was not long after Queen Mary's flight to England, when Kirkcaldy of Grange still held the Castle of Edinburgh for the Queen, that this bold and skilful soldier planned a raid upon Stirling, where the baby King, not yet perfect in his A B C, had just opened his first Parliament—the Parliament with a hole in it; a hole discovered by the sagacious infant either in the table-cover or the roof of the Parliament Hall. The bold Kirkcaldy had enlisted Scott of Buccleuch, and other Border chiefs, with their wild Border riders, in his scheme, which was to make a sudden dash upon Stirling, and by seizing the chief lords of the King's party, and even the person of the King himself, to end the civil war at a blow.

All at first went marvellously well with the enterprise. The Borderers, with a party of musketeers under Lord Claud Hamilton, reached Stirling undiscovered; they were guided by a man named Bell, a native of Stirling, who knew every turn and nook of his native town; and the whole party of about five hundred men found themselves in the middle of the town without even a dog barking at them. Then they raised their war cry: "God and the Queen!" and surrounding the various houses where the chief lords were

lodged, they presently secured the whole faction with one exception, that being the Earl of Mar, who, "entering the back of his new lodging, which was not then finished, played with muskets upon the street, so that he forced the Queen's men to quit the same." Unluckily for the Queen's party the Borderers had followed their dominant instincts, and deeming the fight well over had dispersed in search of plunder. There was much to tempt them in that way certainly, for the town was full of horses belonging to the lords and their followers, and when these were secured there seemed little left to fight for, and the whole party took to flight with their booty. The captured lords made their escape in the confusion, all but Earl Lennox, the Regent, who, mounted behind Spens of Wormeston, his captor, was shot by the Hamilton party, who thus avenged the death of their kinsman, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's and Abbot of Paisley, who had been hanged not long before by the King's party.

Somewhere near Grey Friars, in a house which was adorned by the arms of the Worshipful Guild of Baxters or Bakers, namely, "Three Piels," lived the gallant Colonel Edmunds, a worthy soldier of fortune, the son of a baker at Stirling, who, taking service in the Low Countries as a humble pikeman or musketeer, rose at last to command a regiment in the wars. An honest-minded man was the Colonel, who, when some wandering Scot from Stirling paid him a visit in the camp, and thinking to gain his favour pretended to be charged with messages from the Colonel's kinsman, the Earl, and his loving cousin, the Lord such-a-one, replied sternly that he was of no kin of lords and noble gentlemen, but the son of an honest baxter of Stirling. When the Colonel returned to his native town with the modest fortune he had acquired in the wars, he was met by all the magistrates and chiefs of guilds, who escorted him with all honour to his parents' humble roof. And when the Earl of Mar invited him to dine in the now ruined lodging, the stout Colonel made it a condition that his father and mother should be of the party and be placed above him at the table.

The old burgh of Stirling, indeed, has produced many worthy examples of the old Scottish character. Its merchants were once known far and wide among the ports of the Baltic and North Sea. Manufactures, too, have always been carried on.

In the time of James the Sixth the weaving of shalloons was the chief industry in the town; more recently the tartans of Stirling became famous, then carpets and cottons superseded the tartans, and there are still carpet factories in the outskirts of the town.

Stories are told of an old-fashioned treasurer of the burgh, whose method of book-keeping was both simple and original. On either side of his chimney hung an old boot. In one were kept the revenues of the burgh, in the other all receipts for disbursements. On the day of audit, the boots were carried to the council chamber and emptied out. General Gordon, it is said, had an equally simple method when he was first Governor of the Soudan. Among its other peculiarities it may here be noted, that Stirling was long distinguished for not having a single flesher, that is, butcher, within its boundaries. There was a weekly flesh market, where the housewives provisioned their households, but all those who served it came from the country adjoining. This fact was explained by local tradition as due to the cruelty of a certain flesher's wife who, on one of the early martyrs of the Reformation period being stoned and driven from the town, followed the unhappy victim into the fields and mocked and flouted him in his dying moments. More probably the circumstance was due to some early and wise municipal law, prohibiting the slaughter of cattle within the burgh.

There may be a feeling of disappointment in approaching Stirling Castle, that it hardly answers to expectation in the way of nobility of outline. We may have pictured to ourselves the stronghold

High on a hill, far blazing as a mount,
Raised on a mount, with pyramids and towers,

which are in reality chimney stacks, and the prosaic roofs of barracks and storehouses destroy much of the sentiment of the scene. There still remains, however, the Royal palace, with its quadrangle quaint and bizarre, adorned with the grotesque statues attributed to the taste of James the Fifth, the good man of Ballengiech. The name of the lions' den, sometimes given to the courtyard, recalls the custom of ancient royalty to be attended by a collection of wild animals; a custom of which the lions in the Tower of London are a familiar example. There is a Chapel Royal too; but that was built by James the Sixth for the baptism of Henry, his first son. The

more ancient portion of the palace would be the most interesting, had not fire destroyed the famous room where James the Second slew with his own hand the Earl of Douglas.

But the view from the ramparts makes up for all deficiencies. In rough precipitous descent from the foot of the lofty curtain wall, a ridge of rock slopes down to the river Forth, whose 'auld brig' is commanded by a battery that bears the name of Mary of Guise, who caused its erection. Along the flank of the hill a rude footpath, that once communicated with a private postern, is known as Ballengiech, and the King's secret excursions in search of adventures, amatory and otherwise, when he made use of this footway, earned for him the familiar sobriquet. An isolated mound is the Heading Hill, which seems to make out this fortress palace as the headquarters of Royalty. For what is the King without his headsman? A mere cypher, whom every bonnet laird might flout. But with that awful functionary by his side he makes the boldest tremble. Another slope bears the grotesque name of Hurdie Hawkie, as the scene of the winter sports of the Goodman and his courtiers, who would slide down a snowy track perched on the whitened skulls of oxen—a similar amusement to the well-known Canadian toboggan. But all this engages the eye but for a moment, for beyond stretches a panorama of wonderful extent and interest. To the north winds the Forth, link upon link through the rich Carse of Stirling. Yonder is the Tower of Cambuskenneth, overshadowed by the lofty Wallace monument, for the hero won a battle there, by the old Bridge of Kildean. Beyond rise the grassy solitudes of the Ochill Hills bounding a region of hill and dale, pasture and pleasant woodland, where Forth and Teith and Allan Water come rowin' in, sweetly enough to inspire old Scotia's bards with melody.

Shepherds on Forth, and you by Devon rocks,
sings Drummond, with all the elegance at his command, but the old lilt of Allan Water will be more familiar, and Burns's

By Allan stream I chanc'd to rove
While Phœbus sank beyond Benladdi.

They are all there, the Bens, rising one over the other in tumbled confusion, the real Highland hills, peaks and wild valleys, stormy summits and dark, dismal clefts, dimly stretching away to the regions of the setting sun.

In contrast with the wild sweep of mountain and moorland, the view from the other side of the Castle seems tame and placid; but it is even more full of human interest. At the foot of the castle lies the Royal park, now the playground of the townsfolk; and, indeed, always the scene of their sports, in which their monarchs were accustomed amicably to join. From the park of Stirling to the Castle gate ran Douglas of Kilspindie by the King's stirrup, seeking in vain for a friendly glance from the Royal eyes, in his heavy coat of mail, right up to the gate of the Castle; but with never a glance from the King, who left his old favourite to sit like a beggar in the gate. Thus had the mighty fallen, and so low had sunk the heart of the proud Douglas.

The Royal garden, adjoining the park, all waste and deserted, with the outlines of terraces and parterres still marked in the various hues of the turf that now covers all, contains a curious mound, which is now called the King's Knot; but which was known formerly as the Table Round.

Adeu fair Snowdon, with thy towris hie,
Thy chapel royal, park, and tabill round,

sings the old poet Dunbar; and we hear in the old chronicles that Edward the Second, fleeing from Bannockburn, passed between the Castle and the Table Round. Thus the mound existed before the Stuart Kings, and may even be the original Round Table of Arthur and his Knights. Beyond, the ground slopes gently upwards to the Campsie Hills; and between lies the famous field of Bannockburn.

It is but an insignificant stream, this burn of world-wide fame, that could have formed no line of defence against an attacking foe; and Robert Bruce, as a wise and wary leader, made no attempt to hinder the march of the English chivalry, as they came on in long and glittering columns—barons, knights, and men-at-arms—in all the bravery of mediæval pomp and circumstance.

Standards and gonfalons twixt van and rear
Stream in the air.

The Bruce had skilfully taken his position on the rising ground, his right wing protected by a broken and boggy reach of the burn, while his left rested upon the village of St. Ninian. In his front lay the highway to Stirling, which it was the object of the English army to relieve. These latter had no choice but to fight the Scotch on their own ground; for it was already

the eve of St. John the Baptist's Day when they came within sight of Stirling Rock, and, unless the Castle were relieved by the morrow, it must be surrendered to the Scotch, according to the capitulation, to the lasting disgrace of the English name. On that very evening indeed, Lord Clifford, making a detour to avoid the Scottish forces, strove to reach the Castle and reinforce it; and if he had succeeded, the result of the campaign might have been different, for, then the English might have fought at their leisure. But Randolph interposed with a clump of spearmen, and the English horsemen, unable to break through the wall of steel, retired in confusion.

On the following day there was no time lost on either side. As the midsummer sun rose over the fields the whole English camp was in motion; The Bruce was in his saddle arraying his host—his squares of Scottish spearmen, whose hedge of steel was as impenetrable as a phalanx of Thebes or of Macedon. These squares that covered the sloping ground were all his force, except some five hundred horsemen, whom he kept in reserve out of sight of the enemy. Then the English charged with all their chivalry. In numbers they were three to one against the enemy, but the limited front on which they were compelled to attack deprived them of much of their advantage. And then The Bruce had skilfully prepared the ground on his front with pitfalls and calthorps, so as to check the advance of the English horsemen. Still the masses of the Southern cavalry advanced bravely to the charge, while the English archers, swarming over the open ground, sent a terrible hail of clothyard-shafts among the Scottish squares. That terrible rain of arrows striking through breast-plate of warrior no mortal band could endure for long. It was the critical moment of the battle; and, unless the archers could be put to flight, all would be lost.

Just in the same way Wallace and the national cause had come to destruction at Falkirk. But Wallace, in the hour of need, had been deserted by his mounted chivalry. The Bruce was better served; the English archers, having advanced too rashly, were suddenly attacked by Bruce's handful of cavalry and driven from the field. Then was the battle won for the Scotch. Again and again the English horsemen renewed their charge, but no horses will face a chevaux-de-frise of spear-

points. The whole array was shaken and confused, and when the gillies came pouring over the hill to begin the plunder of the dead, a panic as at the advance of a fresh army spread through the host and scattered them in wild disorder. As the Scottish Chronicler complacently records, "Owre old enemy gat a gret fall."

After Bannockburn the battle of Sauchieburn, which was fought close by, seems a mere skirmish, although King James the Third lost his life in the flight from the combat. At Beaton's Mill the King was slain, where, perhaps, the mill-wheel still is turning. Robert Chambers, who visited the place some half a century ago, says that the house was still standing in his time, though then a private house, some fifty yards east of the road from Glasgow to Stirling; and the good woman of the house pointed out to him the particular corner in which the King expired.

ABOUT WAITERS.

ONCE I remember travelling in a train in Germany, and was considerably impressed by a young gentleman who sat opposite me. He had keen eyes, a bright face, steady observation, and in talking with him, I found that he had received a good education, and had attended classes in one of the Universities. We spoke of one or two Latin authors, of whom he showed much knowledge and appreciation. I felt interested in the young man, and asked him what his line in life might happen to be. Was he going to be a clergyman? He smiled, and said it was something better than that, and I might guess again. My next guess was that he was going to be a doctor or surgeon. No, it was something better than that. Perhaps he was going into some sound commercial pursuit? He negatived this idea too, and, saving me all further speculation, announced that he was going to be a waiter, a "Kellner," perhaps in good time "Ober-kellner." He explained to me that there was a lucrative and glorious career before him. Of course, he gravitated towards London. The Teutonic mind and the Teutonic body have a great tendency to do that.

On the Continent waiters are an institution more extended than among ourselves. In Continental cities people are much less domesticated than we profess to be. The men mostly dine at hotels and restaurants, and the sum of human comfort al-

most depends upon the waiters. At Paris there was lately an alarming disturbance among the *garçon* race. They formed societies, and marched in procession, and sang the Marseillaise or something equivalent. The great difficulty they had was in regard to agencies for waiters, for most employment in Paris in the waiting line is done through agents. They did not consider that the agents treated them fairly, and they would have an agency of their own. Another great difficulty among the Paris waiters was a feud, not an uncommon one, between the young and the old waiters. The great crush of business at the restaurants is between eleven and one, for the *déjeuner* or first dinner, and between six and eight for the second or real dinner. In those busy hours, of course, there is a great need of the highest vigour and alacrity, and here the young naturally have a great advantage over their elders. On the other hand, an old, experienced waiter has his advantages, especially in private dinners and in little suppers.

The greatest social revolution in London within the last generation has been the alteration in the hotels and eating-places. Corresponding with this has been the alteration in the waiters. The old-fashioned British waiter is certainly not extinct, but he is very rare. The waiters are now imported, like so many of the dishes they serve, from abroad. Their slim forms and obliging, nonchalant manners would astonish our ancestors. I know of one restaurant where there are twenty-seven waiters, and each of them pays three-and-sixpence a day for his place. They do not in the least grumble; some of them make money fast. One of them told me that in another year he would have enough money to retire to his native canton, Ticino.

Now about the feeing of the waiters. Some people give too much, while others give too little. What I generally do is to give a penny on every shilling I spend. If I only spend a shilling on a light lunch, I give the waiter a penny. If my dinner runs to six shillings, I give him sixpence. I expect the general run of tips approximates very closely to this.

It has come to be understood, as a matter of social philosophy, that one ought to be on good terms with the waiter. He will serve you well the first time if you are a stranger to him, but if you do not give the "correct tip," he will bear the matter in mind. It is

not alone that he will assume a sour and disappointed manner, but even if he knows his trade sufficiently well to conceal his emotions, he knows how to make you suffer. He has a good deal of a certain kind of patronage at his disposal. A wary diner-out at a public dinner, takes care to establish good terms with the waiter. He, to some extent, is able to make sure of the green fat of the turtle, the back of the grouse, and the old Madeira. The waiter who knows and respects his customer is able to make him thoroughly comfortable; to make his table the picture of neatness; to have everything hot and of the best; and to give judicious hints and disinterested advice.

One day I had a talk with a waiter of the old school, in the well-known hotel of a pretty London suburb.

"Well, sir, I have been pretty well all my life a waiter. I don't call it hard work, that is to say, it is not hard work with the hands, though it is hard work with the head. It does not do to put much beer or wine in one's mouth, I assure you. I have sometimes been carrying a dozen different orders in my head. In some places we get a comparative holiday on the Sunday, except in places near London. A few waiters pay for their places; the head waiter of the old Cock in Fleet Street used to do so. I get a small salary, but I mostly depend on tips. I have buried my wife, and my children are in business, and I am now all alone in the world. I have never been a month without employment, and I have saved up enough money to provide for myself if I were obliged to give up."

"Sometimes," quoth this head-waiter, "there are ways in which a head-waiter may be able to do something for himself, and even get a place of his own. He may have made friends among his customers, perhaps have lent them some money in their younger days, and they may be ready to back him up when he takes a place. Perhaps some gentlemen have an idea that they will start an hotel, say a big one on the limited liability plan, which often means unlimited ruin. They say, 'we will go down and have a dinner on the——, and have a talk with Bob. Bob has been there for the last thirty years, and, if there is any man living who knows all about it, that man is Bob.' And so they offer to make Bob manager; and perhaps he invests his own savings in the venture, and, if he is a good

man and has good luck, he may make his fortune. There is nothing that he might not do—go into the wine trade, and so on."

I had some talk with the people of the inn, who were growing quite grey, and had long reminiscences of this inn before the railway came to the place, or only came within a few miles of it. Now there are three railway stations not far from one another.

"One day there was a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion who took it into his head to bring his bride here in the evening of the day on which they were married. He wrote to me beforehand on the subject. He wanted the whole place turned into a kind of garden or grove. All the hall, and all the staircase and balustrading were to be got up beautifully. I suppose he meant it for a kind of Feast of Tabernacles. Altogether we were obliged to charge him twenty pounds for it. It was a very good job for the house that.

"One day a gentleman and lady came in to lunch. A nice, quiet, tidy little lunch they had, just the same as in a good house of their own. By-and-by I brings the bill, and wonders what they are good for. The gentleman feels in his pockets, and very soon finds out that there is nothing in them. He takes it perfectly quietly.

"'My love,' he says to the lady, 'have you any money?'

"'No, my dear, I haven't,' she says.

"They had come in a quiet brougham, with a very respectable man-servant; and I slips out to speak to him. 'Your people are a queer lot,' I ses. 'What do you call them?'

"'Thought everyone knew our people,' said the man. 'That's Lord and Lady Russell.'

"Our master, of course, said it was all right. They sent the money sure enough, but I think he would have been better pleased if they had not. Lor' bless you, sir, landlords are not the grasping people you sometimes think them. I know one, and a literary gent came and stayed with him two or three nights, and then asked for his bill. 'Tell him, with my compliments,' said the master, 'that there is no bill, and he is welcome to stay as long as he likes.'

"One night, a rather queer-looking gentleman came here. It was a Saturday night. The next morning he wraps himself up in a big cloak and goes and lies down on the brow of our hill. If you have time, sir, you should go and see the view

from our hill. All London, with St. Paul's dome straight before us, is stretched out like a map or a picture. He lay all day long, sir, on the grass rolled up in his cloak and watching the view. He came in here once or twice, but only for a little time. He must go to the hill again. Went away next morning, and left a small bunch of keys behind him. There was a letter soon afterwards, saying that if we had them they were to be sent to an address which he gave; some grand address in the West End. Very glad he was, I daresay, to get those keys again."

I went on afterwards with my talk with the waiter, and said that I knew a waiter at a great restaurant who told me that he had saved eight hundred a year. He had then taken the biggest hotel of a very big town. My friendly waiter shook his head, and did not quite see how it could be done honestly.

The thought of a waiter being dishonest had never entered my head. They are as honest and kindly a set of men as any in the world. But in every profession there are black sheep. Now and then even waiters have curious little histories. The waiters have to watch some of their guests, and now and then there are those who have to watch the waiters. In my own personal history I have never known more than one dishonest waiter. He was a man who systematically laid himself out to please the guests, without due regard to the interests of the proprietor. There is a customer, for instance, who will always give the waiter a good tip for a good dinner. The waiter sets him down before grouse, or salmon, or red mullet, at a time when the price of such dainties is high and the money for the meal does not "run to it." The waiter gets a good tip, but to the landlord it is a dead loss. This particular individual made large savings, but he wasted them foolishly.

There are some waiters who drive a brisk little money trade of their own. Young men, when they lose a great deal of money at billiards, will sometimes have no scruple about borrowing money from the headwaiters. In some instances they neglect to pay it back, and the dishonesty is all on the side of the customers. Still it is quite possible for waiters to be dishonest in other ways than peculation. For instance, there may have been a roystering dinner party, and neither hosts nor guests may be fully competent for the examination of accounts. A waiter may announce the total amount

of the bill, and may quite possibly stick on a sovereign or two. When there is a very big dinner, say five pounds a head exclusive of wines, there is an opening for this sort of thing. Or the figures may be added up wrongly, stray shillings wandering into the columns for pounds. When a guest is so foolish as to become intoxicated—an event occasionally known even amid the mild manners of the present day—he is very much at the mercy of the waiters in respect to what he has with him and what he leaves behind him. As I said before, although there are black sheep in all professions, yet, considering their temptations, waiters are admirably honest.

Sometimes waiters pick up a great deal of curious information and can make good use of it. I knew a man who had been a waiter in a London place of business, and afterwards settled down as the landlord of a most respectable hotel in a provincial city. He had extremely pleasing manners, and was noted for the clear, bright opinions which he expressed on nearly every conceivable subject, and the admirable way in which he supported them, and yet this man was utterly unable to read or write with any degree of correctness. He was asked one day to explain how he came by his multifarious knowledge and large collection of opinions. His explanation was very simple. He had been regularly employed as a waiter at public dinners at the Mansion House, the London Tavern, etc. He had heard all the most remarkable public men of the day speak repeatedly on every variety of topic. He had always listened attentively and with the greatest appreciation. In his own humble way he became quite a public character. There were great men who would always give him a kindly thought, and I have an idea that even in their speeches they would sometimes address themselves to the appreciation and intelligence of their favourite waiter. If they could please that waiter they would be pretty sure of "fetching" the general public.

The waiter is a favourite character in English literature. Some of our greatest humourists have delighted to delineate him. Tennyson's lines about the headwaiter at the Cock have become classical:

O plump head-waiter of the Cock,
To which I most resort,
How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock,
Go fetch a pint of port.
But let it not be of the kind
You set before chance-comers,
But that whose father-grape grows fat
On Lusitanian summers.

Charles Dickens used to revel in descriptions of waiters, for whom he evidently had kindly feelings. At Bella's wedding breakfast, in "Our Mutual Friend," the head-waiter at the Greenwich dinner is likened to the Archbishop of Canterbury invoking a blessing on the young couple. In "David Copperfield," the waiter tells the very young hero how Mr. Top Sawyer fell dead after drinking very strong beer, and considerably takes both beer and chops, that his youthful charge may not incur such serious danger. The waiter in the coffee-house near Gray's Inn, is a familiar figure, and so is that wonderful waiter in "Somebody's Luggage."

We need not, however, go on with the enumeration. Such touches show the kindness that ought to subsist between the public and their most faithful and assiduous servant. When we meet the same waiter, perhaps, half-a-dozen times a week for any number of years, it is difficult not to consider him as a kind of personal friend. And there are good people who, when the waiter has vanished from his scene of action—perhaps lost his situation or been laid up by illness—follow him to his humble abode, to continue the tips and to recognise the heaven-forged links that bind together "all sorts and conditions of men."

SEALSKIN, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM.

IN FOUR PARTS. PART IV.

It will not have escaped notice that the expression of myriads and hundreds of thousands has not unfrequently been met with. This must not be considered a figure of speech. It is really and actually correct, only not correct enough. Millions is the exact word required.

Now we all know what a million is—a thousand thousand. It is very easy to talk of a million, but how very few can actually realise what the word means! Did you ever count a million of anything? When you have done so, you will not speak of millions quite so carelessly as before, but regard that number with very considerable awe. When talking of the seal rookeries and hauling-grounds, we may safely use the word, for it is strictly within the mark. And this is how we get at it.

A characteristic feature of the breeding-grounds which cannot fail to strike an intelligent observer, is the fact that the

seals are distributed all over in the most regular manner. There are no bare spaces here, and overcrowded spots there. It is evident that there is some law of distribution observed, simple no doubt, as the basis of all natural law is if one could only get at it. This law of seal life appears to be that a certain area is necessary for a certain number of individuals, no more and no less. We are all familiar, in idea at least, with that blissful time, when, according to the poet, "Every rood of ground maintained its man." It may have been so once with human beings; it is so at the present time with the seals. But the earth does not maintain them, therefore a rood for each seal is needless; but a rood of ground will harbour a certain well-defined number, and consequently a certain small area will accommodate one individual. The law then is, as far as we can judge, two square feet to one seal, and thus we get at our computation. Get the area of the breeding-ground in square feet, divide by two, and there you have the number resting on it.

To measure the superficies is simple enough. The ground is either well defined by natural formation, and completely covered by the creatures, in which case calculation is easy, or it is boundless in extent, and not filled up. But in this case the extent of the covering is strictly defined, and there is no difficulty about measuring it. It is as easy as taking a chain, or taking sights along a hedge, or a wall, or a fence. You may walk quietly all through the seals without exciting any disturbance.

You find that a certain area contains a certain number of seals, and that this proportion is observed. Whether the ground is one thousand times or one hundred thousand as great, there will be found just one thousand or one hundred thousand times as many seals.

Having found the law, the next thing is to find the week of greatest volume of life, and this is fixed, say on the tenth to the twentieth of July every year. After that the organisation breaks up, the seals scatter out in clusters, the pups leading, and instantly cover two or three times the ground they did the week before. Of course, each cow doubles herself by producing her young, but as she frequently takes to the water and spends perhaps not a quarter of her time on land, again the same ground practically suffices for nearly twice the number that

landed. Perhaps not one-half the mothers are on shore at once. The males being four times the size of the cows, of course take up more room, but then their number is so much less, say one-fifteenth only, that they occupy only one-eighth of the breeding-ground; and this surplus area is more than balanced by the number of cows which come to breed for the first time, and of course produce no young, but stay on land for a few days or weeks, and then spend most of their time afloat.

Thus calculating, we get for the rookeries on St. Paul and St. George, as total of breeding seals and young, three millions one hundred and ninety-three thousand four hundred and twenty. To this must be added the number of "holluschickies." This, however, can only be estimated, as they obey no law, but straggle about all over the place. They appear to be as plentiful as the adults; but to be on the safe side let us take them as only half, say one million five hundred thousand, and we get the grand total of four millions seven hundred thousand of all kinds congregated annually on these, geographically speaking, ridiculous little islands.

It is worthy of remark that in the whole of the North Pacific these are the only places where the seals breed, with the exception of Behring's Island and Copper Island, of the Commander group, situated seven hundred miles to the west, and still belonging to Russia, though now leased, like the Pribylovs, to the American Company. Larger in area, they are, from natural causes, not nearly so fertile in seal life as the latter, producing only nearly fifty thousand skins annually. This, however, is a great improvement on the number taken when the trade was in Russian hands. The American Company entered on their lease in 1871, the previous year's take being twenty-four thousand; in 1880 this had risen to forty-eight thousand five hundred, a sufficient proof of wise, humane, and business-like policy.

It will be asked, what is there in these remote regions that should make these islands, and these only—St. Paul especially—the resort of this astounding quantity of amphibian life? The answer is, that here, and here only in the North Pacific, is found the combination of circumstances which is favourable to the existence, welfare, and reproduction of the species. Man can, will, and does adapt himself to all climates and conditions of life in all latitudes, but the brute creation has not that

facility. These seals demand certain conditions, and must have them, or after a vain struggle it finally disappears altogether. In these regions it finds cool, damp atmosphere; sloping, shingly breeding-grounds; and quiet; and this combination is exactly suited to its organisation and its wants. There is plenty of sloping beach to be found elsewhere; plenty of shingle; any quantity of cool, damp climate; but these are the only spots where these conditions are found all together. The atmosphere just mentioned is that most favourable to the animal; it is in this that it attains its greatest perfection. A few fur seals are to be found on the Galapagos Islands, just on the equator off the coast of Ecuador; but they are poor, miserable specimens, and their fur is ragged, scanty, and utterly valueless—a proof of low physical condition. Then as to the sloping beach. Shingle or rock alone will do. It must not be clay, however well fitted in other respects, for the huge animals continually moving about in their resting-places naturally hollow out the ground; water then runs in and forms pools which plaster the coat all over with clay, preventing natural perspiration and producing sores. Clay will never do, and sand is, if possible, worse still, for it blows into the big eyes of the seal, which are extremely sensitive, and causes intolerable agony. Now everything on the northerly part of the coast is either clay or sand, except the islands we have described, so where else can the creatures go to? Nowhere but to where they do go; and may they go there long and prosper, as Rip van Winkle says.

When we think that these insignificant islands supply practically the world's demand for sealskin, it is melancholy to reflect that there were at one time sealing-grounds in the South Pacific and South Atlantic, to which St. Paul is but a speck on the map. Hardly a rugged coast in the lower south latitudes but was frequented in the aggregate by millions upon millions of fur-bearing amphibia. Turn to the map of the world on Mercator's Projection, and off the coast of Chili we see the Island of Juan Fernandez—Alexander Selkirk's Island—and near to it the Island of Masa Fuera. These two were at one time fairly swarming with seals. If we are to believe Captain Fanning, of the ship "Betsey" of New York, he got a full cargo of skins in 1798 from the latter, an insignificant islet of only twenty-five miles in circumference, and left some five hundred thousand or

seven hundred thousand seals. Subsequently fully a million were obtained by the sealing fleet, which consisted of thirty vessels, many of which were of the largest size. One can form an idea of the exuberance of sea life there, when we hear that, notwithstanding the inroads made by this horde of devastators, Captain Fanning still obtained some skins in 1815; and even twenty years later it is reported that four hundred and eighty thousand skins were taken in a single season. At present the two islands are leased to a Chilean merchant, who employs the settlers in cutting wood, tending cattle, and, during the season, in sealing, the average catch being about two thousand annually.

And now going south we come to the west coast of Patagonia, a good thousand miles as the crow flies, from Chiloe Island to Cape Horn, with nobody knows how much coast-line—twenty thousand to fifty thousand miles, when we consider the innumerable islands, bays, and inlets of the most deeply indented coast known. Every yard of this is admirable sealing-ground, and was so occupied a century ago; but fifty years of indiscriminate slaughter has left its mark, and now the trade is a lottery. Punto Arenas, or Sandy Point, in the Straits of Magellan, is the headquarters of the trade, but the annual catch amounts only to a paltry one thousand annually. South of Cape Horn are South Shetland and South Orkney; higher up to the east are the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, all of the same character as the Patagonian coast, all in former days the resort of the countless multitudes of seals, and all to-day beneath notice as sealing-grounds.

Carry your eye over the map eastwards, and every name you see in low latitudes was known at the beginning of this century to sealers, as a place where a good cargo was to be got. Sandwich Land, about 60° S.; Tristan da Cunha, much higher up; Gough Island, south-west of the Cape; Prince Edward and Marion Islands, south-east; Crozet Island, Kerguelen Land; Macquarie and Emerald Islands; south of Tasmania and Antipodes Island, south-east of New Zealand. From this last insignificant spot, Captain Pendleton, of New York, secured sixty thousand skins in 1801, and in 1814 and 1815 the enormous total of four hundred thousand was taken. One ship is said to have loaded no fewer than one hundred thousand, which, owing to faulty preparation, spoiled on the voyage to London,

and had to be dug out with spades and sold as manure. This, of itself, shows the spirit of utter recklessness which pervaded the fur trade. To get the skins, no matter how, to fill your ship and get to market, was the only thing thought of. A skin was a skin, whether belonging to an old bull or cow, an adult male or a pup, not even cows just ready to bear were spared. To kill the goose that laid the golden eggs is, and was then, proverbially the height of foolishness; but this is what seems to have actuated the sealers. Nothing that had life was spared, and, consequently, there was a glut in the market, and skins were unsaleable.

Then, again, thousands upon thousands of old worthless skins were procured which could never pay for carrying, and the result to the ship was an adverse balance on the season's transaction, a loss both to the public and the trader. All that was wanted was an enlightened policy; but what was everybody's business was nobody's, and so the breeding-grounds were devastated and the amphibians exterminated. Of course, nobody ever thought of a close time, or preservation, and, if they had, there was no authority to enforce it, for most of these breeding-grounds, besides being out of the way, really belonged to nobody. It could only have been observed by a common understanding of those in the trade, and, after all, what was to prevent an outsider from slipping in and helping himself to all he could lay hands on?

Outside Behring's Sea, the only rookery protected is that on Cape Corrientes, which is cared for by the Government of Buenos Ayres. This is a very small one, producing only five thousand annually; and Lobos Island, on the north coast of the Rio de la Plata, is responsible for ten to fourteen thousand. The total catch of the world, outside Behring's Sea, will hardly mount up to fifty thousand annually.

Taking the supply from the Pribylows at one hundred thousand, and from the Commander group at fifty thousand, we thus get two hundred thousand as the maximum number of sealskins brought to market every year; and when we find that it takes three to make a lady's cloak, it will evidently be a long time before everybody has a sealskin jacket.

Before leaving the subject it will be found interesting to learn something about the government, constitution, and management of those out-of-the-way islands.

In June, 1870, Congress passed an Act authorising the Secretary of the Treasury

to lease the Islands of St. Paul and St. George to private parties, subject to certain rules and regulations. The matter was publicly advertised and tenders invited, with the result that a company of traders of San Francisco, under the style of the Alaska Commercial Company, were the successful bidders, and a lease (not transferable) was thereupon granted for twenty years, from the first of May, 1870.

The following are the chief points. The Company agrees to pay to the Treasury fifty-five thousand dollars annually; we may call this rent. Besides this the Company agrees to pay an internal revenue tax or duty of two dollars sixty-two-and-a-half cents for each seal-skin taken and shipped; fifty-five cents for each gallon of oil obtained from the seals for sale on the islands or elsewhere; to furnish, free of charge to the inhabitants of St. Paul and St. George, annually, during the continuance of the lease, twenty-five thousand dried salmon, sixty cords fire-wood, and a sufficient quantity of salt and a sufficient quantity of barrels for preserving the necessary supply of meat; and to maintain a school on each island suitable for the education of the natives for a period not less than eight months in each year. Further, the Company covenants and agrees not to kill upon St. Paul more than seventy-five thousand fur seals, and upon St. George not more than twenty-five thousand yearly; not to kill any fur seals except in the months June to October, both inclusive; not to kill the said seals at any time by fire-arms, or means tending to drive the said seals from the said islands; not to kill any female seals, or seals under one year old and not to kill any seal in waters adjacent to the said islands or on the beach, cliffs, or rocks, where they haul up from the sea to remain. Furthermore, it is covenanted and agreed that the Company and its agents shall not keep, sell, furnish, give or dispose of any distilled spirituous liquors on either of the islands to any of the natives thereof.

Philanthropically speaking, these conditions need no comment. The very fact that spirits are prohibited is enough to show that a wise and humane policy dictated the terms of the lease. The supply of a certain large quantity of food, gratis, is another proof of the same beneficent spirit. These, of course, were the doings of the United States Government, and had to be accepted before the lease was granted. Let us see how the Company has acted.

There is a resident physician on each island, whose example, seconded by that of the other whites, has already induced greater cleanliness and a more healthful mode of living among the natives. Each island has a competent schoolmaster, and a well-warmed and convenient school-house, open from the first of October to the first of June. The difficulty, however, has been to induce parents to send their children. They doubt their ability to learn both English and Russian, and, as the latter is the language of their Church, it naturally gets the preference.

To the natives is reserved the monopoly of the killing of the seals and preservation of the skins. They have full liberty to come and go as they like, and the right to work or not, with the understanding that, in the latter case, their places will be filled by others. This is right enough. The Company is a despotism tempered by sound and enlightened commercial principles. Its members have gone far beyond the letter of their bargain; not that they are lovers of their species more than other folks, but because they approach the subject through that organ which is the tenderest and most sensitive of all, the pocket. It pays them best to be liberal.

If there is one thing better known than another to intelligent men of business, it is this: that if a man is well fed, well housed, and well clad, we can get better work and more of it out of him, than under opposite conditions. Under Russian rule the natives were housed in miserable tumble-down cabins half under ground, built of sods and roofed with earth, damp, dark, and indescribably filthy, everything in them being coated with the black, shiny, greasy soot from the burning of the seal fat, which gives out an intolerably offensive smell. Under such conditions vitality was necessarily at a low point, and there was not the physical capability of getting through the hard work of the slaughtering season. But now everything is changed. Each family has a snug wooden house lined with tarred paper, and furnished with a stove and outhouses complete. Streets are laid out regularly, and a plan drawn with every house marked thereon. There is a large church on St. Paul, and a smaller one on St. George. The results are naturally encouraging. In 1872 seventy-six men in fifty days secured seventy-five thousand skins; in 1873 seventy-one men in forty days took seventy-five thousand skins; in 1874 eighty-four

men secured ninety thousand skins in thirty-nine days. The Company is allowed to take one hundred thousand skins annually, and naturally takes that number or as near to it as they can. At first it was physically impossible to manage it under three or four working months. What was the result? The skin from the fourteenth of June, when it first arrives, up to the first of August, is in the finest possible condition. From the first of August to the end of October it deteriorates rapidly as the animal approaches its moulting time, and is in this condition practically worthless. The object then is to get all the skins in six weeks. Under the old dispensation the catch was perhaps a quarter prime, and the rest middling down to rubbish. To-day the whole take is prime, and fetches the top price. We can all see that this is business.

The results expressed in hard cash are most satisfactory to the United States Treasury. The terms were not arranged, and the lease delivered till the thirty-first of August, 1870, and the vessels and agents did not therefore arrive till the first of October. As the season was nearly over only nine thousand two hundred skins were secured that year. Since then, however, the catch has nearly approached the lawful maximum, with the highly gratifying result that the rent and tax paid into the Treasury to the end of 1880 amounted to three million four hundred and fifty-two thousand four hundred and eight dollars, a very good interest on the purchase-money of the whole of Alaska.

So much for the fur seals. With the Editor's permission I may have something more to say some day about those out-of-the-way regions, and the animal and bird life there to be found.

LOST IN THE VALLEY.

By the Author of "Driven of the Wind," etc.

A STORY IN SIXTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XV.

MAURICE felt a thrill of intense excitement as the doctor's tall, well-knit figure appeared in the doorway of his room.

"You've been reducing yourself to a beautiful condition, certainly," was Dr. Grantley's first remark as he sat by the side of Maurice's sofa, after shaking hands with him. "You look older than I do," he continued cheerfully. "And why did you telegraph that you wanted to see me

professionally, when you simply wanted to ask me all about Eveline Douglas?"

"Because I thought that would make you come," answered his patient quietly. "Also, perhaps you can tell me what is the matter with me? I believe I am dying; but I should like to know now."

"I can tell you what started your illness," said the doctor gravely; "but I can give you no hope of cure from without. You must cure yourself."

"Have you married her, Dr. Grantley?" Maurice inquired irrelevantly.

"Married! married whom? No; of course not. What put that into your head?" said the other sharply, his colour deepening. Then, as his patient was silent, he continued: "If you must know, I asked Eveline, for I suppose she is the only 'her' for you, to be my wife, and she was silly enough to say 'no.' She said she did not love me in the right way. I told her from what I had seen of the right way of loving, it did not wear any better than the wrong, and I was quite ready to put up with her as she was."

"Did she send for you that evening in Paris, after I left her?" asked Maurice, raising himself on his elbow, and looking earnestly at the doctor.

"Yes; she sent for me, if you please, to beg me to go up and talk you round, which I promptly declined to do. I told her," Dr. Grantley went on, as he bent over a prescription he was writing, "that it was a very good thing that all the nonsense was over, and that, if she had any sense and any pride she would leave Paris for a time, and you altogether."

"And may I ask what right you had to give her such advice?"

"The right any man has to prevent the moral suicide of a fellow-creature. You were the last sort of man for her to marry; you had already mistrusted her, and would certainly have mistrusted her again. And a nice time she would have had of it among your relatives here—very excellent people, but not the sort to appreciate Eveline and to make allowances for her. You were too young for her, much too young."

"You see she didn't think so," said Maurice.

"I dare say not. Women and children never do know what is good for them. As I was telling you, I appealed to her pride and self-respect. Quite useless; she didn't appear to have any. But when I reminded her how much older than you she was, and

how extremely unhappy your parents would make you if she didn't leave you alone to go home and marry some nice girl without either antecedents or ideas—just the right person for you in fact—with their consent, she listened to me at last, being a very affectionate, weak-minded young woman, and went peaceably off with me to my old mother's. And she has been with that most admirable woman ever since, until a few weeks ago, when she took it into her head to go away, because I asked her to marry me. A most absurd proceeding on her part, for I had been wanting to marry her several years, and never expected for a moment that she would have me at the first asking. Being a woman, of course she can't see that I am the right man for her. However, I mean to ask her annually until she says yes."

"You—you don't think she is fond of me still, then?" asked Maurice.

"I don't think she ever was fond of you, except in a half-sentimental, half-motherly way," Dr. Grantley replied decisively, "so you may make your mind easy on that point. Of course, she was a good deal hurt at first when you went off like that; but she's quite got over it by this time, and never mentions your name to my mother."

"Is she well?" asked Maurice after a pause; "and is she in Paris?"

"She was quite well when I saw her last, about a month ago, and as blooming as a rose. She returns to Paris for the New Year. But although she is in England I don't mean to see her."

"In England! Is she in England? Where?" asked Maurice excitedly.

"Oh, travelling about," answered the doctor vaguely. "She came over to buy a property on the east coast because it had a ruined abbey on it, and had appealed to her romantic imagination. Probably she found that the ruin let the rain in, for she has written to the O'Haras to say that she returns to the Boulevard Haussmann in a fortnight. And now, my dear boy, take my advice, pull yourself together and forget all about her; she is not the sort of woman for you. She has been through such horrible experiences that you are nothing more than an episode in her life—you never can be anything more. Marry some nice girl with no ideas but those you instil into her mind yourself, and no memories you cannot obliterate. Eveline is a pure, good woman, who married an arrant scoundrel against the advice of her friends, and has had to suffer for it ever since.

Her principal fault is that she is too good-looking—the last thing that Mrs. Grundy will forgive. Also, she is too easily bullied. I don't agree with her friends in Paris, who blame you for believing de Villars's story. It was perfectly natural and proper on your part. Don't worry about her any more. She has certainly forgotten all about you. If you forget all about her, you'll soon get well. Medicines won't cure you, but here's a prescription that won't do you any harm. I'm going back to Paris to attend a consultation to-morrow, but I'll cross over again and see you next week, as I take a great interest in you, and always have done. You are a nice lad, far too good to fret yourself into a decline about any young woman, however fascinating. And don't imagine you are dying; death is a most slippery thing. When we think we hold him he eludes us, and when we think we are out of his sight he is at our elbow. You are still a good head and shoulders in front of him, and can outstrip him altogether if you choose to try. And now, good-bye."

"Good-bye, and thank you," said Maurice. "You have done me more good than you think."

He lay back peacefully on his couch until he heard the front door close on Dr. Grantley. Then he started up and rang the bell.

"Ask Miss Ethel to come to me at once," he said to the servant.

He was turning over in his mind, not the doctor's advice, but seven words of the doctor's conversation:

"A ruined abbey on the east coast."

When his sister came, he begged her to search in the library for a ponderous work in two volumes, called "Antiquities of England and Wales."

"And now, dear," he said, when she brought it, "I want you to read every word concerning ruined monastic buildings on the east coast of England. And if you only do this properly, I shall get quite well in no time," he added coaxingly.

Ethel was engaged to be married, and love lent her discernment. She divined at once that Eveline Douglas was connected with abbeys on the east coast, and she read every word concerning them for two good hours without making any comment.

Only she showed her suspicions by exclaiming suddenly, while skimming the page with her eyes before reading it aloud.

"I believe this is the likeliest one, Maurice."

Brother and sister were both almost equally excited as she read, so rapidly as to be almost unintelligible, with Maurice looking over her shoulder, a short description of the Abbey of St. Basil, on the coast of Essex.

"Part of this beautiful ruin was converted into a dwelling-place at the beginning of the present century by the then owner," the book informed them. "It is situated within half a mile of the sea-shore. The ruined chapel and cloisters, surrounded by a profuse vegetation, present a most beautiful and impressive appearance, particularly by moonlight. The house, a substantial, comfortable structure, is chiefly built with materials taken from the old abbey, the side entrance being directly through the cloisters. The grounds are extensive and beautiful. St. Basil's Abbey is at present in the possession of Mr. Stephen Graham, the eminent brewer."

"He died this year," exclaimed Maurice. "The property must have been sold and —"

"And she must have bought it," said Ethel.

Maurice looked at her a moment; then he laughed.

"She! Who?"

"Don't be vexed with me, Maurice," she said. "Of course I know you wouldn't get so excited unless it was something about her. I won't say a word about it unless you like. Oh! I do hope you'll write to her, and she'll come here, and it'll all come right, and you'll marry her, and get quite well and happy."

She gave her brother an affectionate hug in conclusion.

"Thank you, dear," he said. "But she has a much better man than I in love with her—Dr. Grantley, whom you saw just now. And she has forgotten all about me, they tell me."

"Who told you so?"

"Dr. Grantley himself."

"And you believed him!" exclaimed Ethel contemptuously. "Why, Maurice, you must be silly. If any other girl who was in love with my Ted came to me, and told me he had forgotten all about me, I should simply laugh at her, and think her a jealous and interfering cat."

"Wise little woman," said her brother. "I do believe there's a good deal in what you say. Now run away, and mind, not a word to any one about St. Basil's."

Ethel readily bound herself to secrecy, and Maurice lay back on his pillow, to

think over all he had heard. Another glance through the volume by him convinced him that Dr. Grantley's description could apply only to this particular estate, there being indeed no other habitable abbey on the east coast of England.

"And she is there now; will be there for a fortnight longer," he said to himself. "And she loved me as she will never love Dr. Grantley, I'm certain of it. Miss McIntyre had to own that parting with me saddened her, and she only sent for Dr. Grantley to get reconciled to me. She is so tender, so gentle, that when I tell her how I have suffered I know she will forgive me, and she may marry Dr. Grantley later on, if I can only find my way to her first, tell her everything, and die in her arms with her lips on mine."

He leaned back against the cushions, and, closing his eyes, thought of her as he saw her last, sitting by him in her blue velvet gown, her sad brown eyes sometimes filling with tears while she told him the story of her life that evening in Paris more than a year ago.

The white cat came and rubbed herself affectionately against him in the firelight. He picked her up.

"We were quite right to be fond of her," he informed her, "for she really loved us all the time."

Going to the window, he looked out at the bare trees, idealised now by glistening snow, and at the heavy sky beyond.

"I shall have a cold journey to-morrow," he said.

Then he made a rush at his medicines, which he had rather neglected, and wondered whether in twelve hours he could take sufficient tonics to set him up in health altogether.

He surprised and delighted the rest of the family by appearing at dinner for the first time for some days, and by talking incessantly.

"I mean to get well," he said as they crowded round him in affectionate concern at the sight of his flushed cheeks and glittering eyes.

Early next day he insisted that he must have a drive; it was the one thing to complete his cure. And, as they humoured him in everything, the brougham was brought round, although the snow was four feet deep under the hedges, and the sky was dark and lowering.

By his special request, Ethel was his sole companion; his mother and sister Mary saw them start, and filled the car-

riage with all the available rugs and furs to keep the invalid warm.

"Where are you going, Maurice?" Ethel inquired, as they drove through the lodge gates. She had divined some hidden motive in what appeared to the rest of the family only a whim.

"To the station first," he answered, "on my way to St. Basil's Abbey."

"It will kill you, Maurice," she cried, "such a journey in such weather, and in your state of health."

"It will kill or cure me," he replied quietly; "and I will risk being killed for the chance of being cured."

"Let me go with you," she pleaded.

But he would not allow that, and, all remonstrances being in vain, she had to be content with seeing him into the train and listening appalled while the guard related the many changes Maurice would have to make, before he could hope to reach the sea-side village where St. Basil's Abbey was situated.

"Why, you won't get there till nearly ten o'clock," she exclaimed; "and what shall I say to them all at home when I get back without you? It is simply madness, Maurice," she murmured helplessly as she fluttered to and from his carriage window, and loaded her brother with sandwiches from the refreshment room, and wraps and rugs from the carriage.

"Keep them quiet, there's a good little girl," he said. "Don't let them know how far it is if you can help it. I will telegraph when I get there. I simply must go. If I only find Eveline, I shall be all right."

His hand, as his sister held it in hers, at parting, was hot and dry, his eyes were shining with the restless brilliancy of fever. As the train steamed out of the station, Ethel burst into a passion of tears, for it seemed to her that she had been looking on her brother's face for the last time.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAURICE himself felt happier and more hopeful than he had done for a long time—if, indeed, the curious state of ecstatic calm into which he had drifted could be called happiness and hope. He waited patiently over meagre fires in chilly waiting-rooms during the many changes he had to make in his tedious journey, while the grey light waned in the sky, and the snow began to fall with a slow persistency that pressed long continuance.

It was past seven o'clock in the evening before he reached Colchester, where he changed trains for the last time but one. He had been so anxious to keep up sufficient physical strength to attain the object of his journey, that he had taken every possible care of himself, keeping out of draughts, enveloping himself in a carriage rug, eating the sandwiches Ethel had provided him with, and trying to distract his thoughts with a novel he bought at a station book-stall. But for all his precautions, by the time he entered the train which was waiting at Colchester his head ached maddeningly, his eyes were burning, and a feverish restlessness had taken possession of his entire frame.

It was a bitterly cold night; the carriage windows were by this time obscured by a border of frozen snow several inches in height; outside a slight wind had risen, in which the falling veil of white was tossing and swirling.

The last station at which Maurice changed was half-an-hour's journey from his destination. Here, as he stood shivering on the platform under the insufficient shelter afforded by a slight wooden erection; straining his eyes to watch the approach of the train down the snow-covered track, on which the lines were scarcely visible; his thought occurred to him, had he come on a wild-goose chase after all?

What if Eveline had left St. Basil's, or had never been there, but to some other ruined Abbey? What if the doctor had accidentally or intentionally misinformed him as to her movements? Eveline hated cold, Maurice knew, and might well have shortened her visit to England when this bitter weather began, and fled to a warmer climate.

His heart sank within him. He seemed to be chasing a shadow that eluded him. In a sudden seeming clearness of vision, brought on by dejection and fatigue, his conduct appeared the height of rashness and folly. How much wiser to have written first to ascertain if she was really there!

But it was too late to go back now, his train was already advancing, a red spot in the expanse of moving, misty white before him, and he was soon being carried slowly along the flat, uninteresting coast scenery towards the sea-side village where St. Basil's Abbey was situated. The place took its name from the ruin, which was fairly well known. As the train entered the station Maurice's old attention to

details suggested to him a way by which, at least, he might end his suspense.

As he alighted, the only passenger, with the exception of a few farm-labourers, he called the solitary porter, and asked the way to the Abbey.

"It's about ten minutes' walk from here, sir, and the roads are very hard. But I'm afraid you'll get no conveyance to-night."

"Can you tell me the name of the present owner?" was Maurice's next inquiry.

"Mr. Henry Graham, sir. But are you ill?"

Maurice had staggered back as the man spoke, but he soon recovered himself.

"I'm all right, thank you. I've made a mistake. I fear, I thought some friends of mine were stopping at the Abbey. Is there a train back to Colchester to-night?"

"Not to-night, sir. The last went half-an-hour ago. Perhaps your friends may be at the Abbey, for Mr. Graham has let it for some months to some ladies: Mount Edgecumbe, I think, the name is."

Maurice hesitated. Could this be a bad shot at Montecalvo? He would chance it at least; since he could not leave St. Basil's to-night, he might as well freeze to death in the lanes as shiver to death in some chilly inn.

"Will you tell me the way?" he asked.

"I'll send my boy with you," said the man, good-naturedly, touched by the delicate appearance of the solitary first-class traveller, who was misguided enough to visit St. Basil's on such a night as this, without any luggage, and apparently without any idea where he was going to.

"If your friends are not there, Tom, my boy, will take you to the Queen's Head, where you can put up for the night," he said.

Maurice thanked him, and followed a shy, rosy-cheeked boy of twelve, who carried a lantern in his hand, out of the little station, and past some straggling cottages to a dreary country road, where they both stumbled at each step into deep cart-ruts in the hard, frozen ground, while the snow pricked their faces, and thawed in a continuous stream inside Maurice's collar and down his back.

The boy in front whistled unceasingly, trying, with praiseworthy persistency, to possess himself of some well-known air that always eluded him after the third or fourth note, in a manner that seemed to put a finishing touch to Maurice's misery; but he staggered along after him in the darkness, every step he took seeming to re-echo in his aching head. Suddenly the boy left

off whistling, and knocked his lantern against two iron gates encrusted with snow, that stood a little back from the road.

"'Ere's the Abbey," said the boy, "but I dursn't go in, because there's a ghost that 'aunts the clisters, with 'is 'ed under 'is arm. Jim Purvis seed it last week."

The snow had collected so thickly round the gates that it was with difficulty the boy opened them. The moment they were ajar the boy retreated, casting a frightened glance into the darkness within.

"I'll wait outside a few minutes until you've seed if your friends is there," he said, as Maurice put a shilling into his hand. Then he whistled louder and more discordantly than ever, until the bold young gentleman, who, apparently, feared not ghosts, entered the rusty gates, and was lost to view; soon after which, being overcome by spiritual terrors, the boy turned round and ran home as fast as his feet could carry him.

Inside, Maurice crept on, feeling his way between tall hedges of evergreens, that shook snow down upon him from their branches as he caught at them to support his tottering footsteps. Passing through a Gothic archway, thickly hung with ivy, he found himself at last within the ruined cloisters. Here, for a few seconds, he rested, seated on the ledge of one of the tall windows, protected a little from the storm outside. For the roof above still remained intact, and the worn stones under his feet, which for so many years the monks had trodden daily, were almost free from snow. Straight on ahead a narrow line of red light proclaimed the vicinity of the house; and, as his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, Maurice found that it proceeded from a large French window built right up against an arched doorway, which had formerly been the entrance from the cloisters to the old Abbey. He could see too, now, the delicate tracery of the cloister windows standing out dark against the moving white sky beyond; and he could hear, or fancied he could hear, the sound of someone singing, some song that seemed strangely familiar to him, in the intense silence. But, in the dizziness and numbness that was gradually creeping over him, he could not recognise either the air or the words, and the line of light in front of him seemed to grow more and more distant as he watched it.

There was a large square tombstone a few feet distant from the window ahead; if only he could crawl to that, Maurice

knew he should be able to see into the lighted room—see her, perhaps, whom he had come in search of, before cold, and pain, and weariness overpowered him altogether.

But when he rose, and moved slowly onwards, supporting himself against the low edge of the cloister windows, the light seemed to recede before him, seemed as distant as heaven itself. Was he dead already, he wondered, or was it a woman or an angel that was singing?

He reached the tombstone at last, and sinking down upon it, he listened with all his soul to the music that sounded very near him now, struggling to command his exhausted senses, and to concentrate his wandering attention on to what he should see and hear.

The crimson curtains of the room, into which he could see, were partly drawn. Suddenly a woman's figure appeared between them—not Eveline's, but, thank Heaven! Miss McIntyre's.

For Maurice knew, as he recognised her, that he had not come in vain, and, at that moment, all his heart was lifted in joy and thanksgiving. Then the singing, which had for a few moments ceased, recommenced. He knew the song quite well this time, for it was one of his own, the one she liked best.

Some day we two shall meet,
For I shall come once more,
As one who treads an old, old street,
Stops at the well-known door:
And then I know at eventide
I shall not come in vain,
Thy heart of hearts will open wide
And take me home again.

The tears were filling Eveline's eyes as she sang the last words.

"Poor boy," she murmured softly. "Are you there still, Ellen?" she asked, turning suddenly at a sound that seemed quite near her. But Miss McIntyre had already left the room.

"How strange," Eveline said to herself, rising from the piano; "I felt certain I heard someone call my name. It must have been only fancy, I suppose, for I am absurdly nervous to-night. I shall be believing in the story of the Ghostly Monk next, and hearing him groaning in the cloisters, as the servants say he does—"

She stopped suddenly as she was crossing the room, for something seemed to tap against the window, and a voice that was almost a wail, to utter her name again.

Eveline was really frightened. Her first impulse was to call Miss McIntyre or one of the servants to her assistance; her

second, and the one she followed, to go to the window, draw aside the curtains sharply, and peer out into the cloisters.

At first she saw and heard nothing; but as she was slowly leaving the window, some dark object, lying out of the line of light from the window, at the foot of the moss-grown tombstone, met her eye. She turned faint and sick with fear at first sight of it; then, although no feature of his face was visible, a sudden instinct made her guess who it was that lay there in the cold and darkness. Bursting open the window, she bent over Maurice, and, clasping her arms round him, turned his face up to the light.

It was ashen-grey in colour, fixed, and rigid as death.

She pressed her lips to his in a wild effort to impart warmth and life into them, then, exerting all her strength, she raised him in her arms, and, dragging him by slow degrees into the warm room, she laid him on the sofa before the fire and knelt by his side, chafing his hands in hers in a passion of terror lest he should be already dead, pressing her soft cheek to his, and raining hot tears upon his still face.

By the time Miss McIntyre re-entered the room Maurice's eyes were open and fixed, at first blindly, upon the face of the woman he loved.

The whole household was soon on the alert, the doctor was sent for, and every attention lavished upon the invalid. It was not until two hours later that the power of speech returned to him. Then he only whispered to Eveline as she knelt beside him:

"I ought to be kneeling to you. Will you forgive me?"

"My poor boy," she answered, "I have nothing to forgive."

"If I get well you must marry me," was his next remark.

"No, Maurice dear, you must not ask me that," she replied with tender firmness.

"Then I shall not get well," he said.

But when his parents came to see him a few days later they found him lying by the fire, with his head on the shoulder of the most beautiful woman they had ever seen, and with a look of restful happiness on his face that brought back all its old youthfulness and charm.

And he introduced her to them as:

"My wife, Eveline."

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